

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12/27/2015**

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## ***Why Educational New Year Resolutions Fail, and How to Avoid Pitfalls***

### **NEW survey reveals top resolutions for 2016 and expert advice for realizing educational goals**

Soon the ball will drop and welcome us to 2016; what are your new year's resolutions? According to a Harris Poll conducted on behalf of Brandman University, 67 percent of adults are making New Year resolutions for 2016. Some 26 percent are planning to make an education/career resolution, and 21 percent have done so in the past.

#### **Top Resolutions for 2016**



Other findings from the poll show that 73 percent have made resolutions in the past, including 21 percent with dreams of earning a degree. Not everyone was able to realize those goals; over half of adults say that something has prevented them from following through on an educational resolution. Top five obstacles below.

#### **Obstacles to Going Back to College**



"It's no surprise that fitness tops the list for 2016 – it does nearly every year. With that out of the way, look at the others; they are all focused on financial stability, career or education. The best path towards realizing those is to earn a college degree, or an advanced degree such as an MBA," said Brandman University spokesperson Joe Cockrell. "Nearly a quarter of American adults started college but didn't finish – that's about 37 million people. Now, they're being left behind in an economy increasingly focused on bachelor's-prepared workers. At Brandman our mission is to help them realize those resolutions for themselves, and their families."

Cockrell added that **MyPath**, a new app-based degree program launched by Brandman earlier this year, addresses all five of the primary obstacles cited in the poll.

More than two years in the making, **MyPath is a first-of-its-kind competency-based program that represents a new path to a bachelor's degree.** It allows students to earn an accredited degree at a fraction of the cost, at their own pace and in their spare time. MyPath incorporates a new tuition model as well; students pay \$5,400 per academic year allowing them to learn as much as they can. In addition, the new technology developed for MyPath incorporates all material within the online platform, so there are no textbooks to buy, saving students thousands of dollars.

“Competency-based education has been shown to be an increasingly effective tool to get qualified, experienced graduates to the marketplace quickly, and for them, MyPath does that cost-effectively. Moreover, it allows them to focus on what they need to learn, not what they already know. That is particularly important to working adult students. With MyPath, most can complete their bachelor's in two or three years, which means a savings in both time and money,” said Brandman University Chancellor Gary Brahm.

For those working adults who think they are too old to go back to college (14 percent cite that as obstacle in the poll) MyPath has proven to be effective for older students. Take 58-year-old Venita Campagna, one of the students who has been beta testing the platform over the past year. She was forced out of retirement after her husband's battle with cancer drained their life savings and found that she needs a bachelor's degree to make more than minimum wage. “This program has given me confidence, hope and proves you're never too old to go back to college,” Campagna said. “The quicker I work, the faster I'll earn my degree. The faster I earn it, the less it costs. I'm hoping to finish within the next year.”

## Expert Advice on How to Avoid Common Pitfalls This Year

*Experts throughout the university worked to develop this list of advice for those who have visions of a college degree in their resolutions this year. University spokesperson Joe Cockrell is available to share in recorded or live interviews.*

### 1. This is a major life decision: Do your homework

First, it's extremely important to recognize that going back to school is a major life decision and takes commitment, similar to weight loss or habit changes. The most important thing you can do is research your options. There's a lot of advertising for universities these days. Look beyond the commercials, because not all schools geared towards working adults were created equal. Some good questions to ask include:

- **What is your graduation rate?**
- **What is your school's loan default rate?**
- **Is this college for-profit or non-profit?**
- **What support services do you have in place to help me as a new student?**

You'll make your situation worse if you start a degree and go into debt to attend but never finish; the most important information to look for is a potential university's graduation rates (the percentage of students who actually complete the degree programs they enroll in, and the student loan default rate (the percentage of students who had to borrow money to attend that school, but are in default on loans).

### 2. Take advantage of financial aid to help you, but use it wisely

College affordability is a hot topic these days and it is certainly worth comparing tuition at various universities. Other important factors to consider when financing your education include:

- **It is possible to finance your education in a variety of ways and there are a number of financial aid options, including grants, scholarships and federally-subsidized loans. Only borrow what you absolutely need to pay for tuition and related expenses.**
- **Be sure to check with your employer about tuition benefits – many organizations have programs that help employees earn a degree, so ask your boss or HR department about your company's policy.**
- **There are a variety of factors unique to your own situation, so the best thing to do is take advantage of financial aid counseling from each university you are considering.**
- **You should know exactly how much it is going to cost and exactly how long it will take to earn your degree.**
- **For adult students, programs that allow you to continue working full time while attending can help minimize the amount of student loans you'll need (night classes or online)**

### **3. Do better than the 'old college try'**

Just like a person looking to drop the pounds has to get serious about exercise, adult students have to put in the time and effort to finish. Suggestions for those returning to college include:

- **Make homework part of your regular routine; put your class and assignment schedule into your daily calendar and schedule blocks of individual study time just like you would a dentist appointment or important meeting; put reminders for important due dates as well.**
- **Engage your family and friends in your effort to return to school, by making it meaningful and valuable for them, too. That may mean, for example, doing your homework at the kitchen table with your kids and sharing what you're learning.**
- **Don't isolate yourself as a student – your peers in the classroom are going through the same thing. Build a support network of classmates (or co-workers who are also returning to school). Use social media sites, such as LinkedIn groups, to connect with others and share experiences and support, especially if you choose an online program.**

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**Expert Source:** Joe Cockrell is the Vice Chancellor for Communications at Brandman University: a private, nonprofit institution. A former journalist and TV producer at stations in Midwestern markets, he is a go-to CCO for reporters because he understands how to deliver what media needs. He is an experienced in-studio guest, bringing a high level of energy and enthusiasm to live interviews (multiple Top 20 markets, CNN, Good Morning America, MSNBC). He is passionate about educating viewers through relevant, timely information. Education and career advancement are among his core expertise. Since leaving news, Cockrell has served in higher education for over 15 years and co-founded a regional employment website. He regularly teaches workshops about using social media to job seekers and Veterans.

**Survey Methodology:** This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of Brandman from November 23-25, 2015 among 2,096 adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables, please contact Joe Cockrell at 949-793-3057.

**About The Harris Poll:** Over the last 5 decades, Harris Polls have become media staples. With comprehensive experience and precise technique in public opinion polling, along with a proven track record of uncovering consumers' motivations and behaviors, The Harris Poll has gained strong brand recognition around the world. The Harris Poll offers a diverse portfolio of proprietary client solutions to transform relevant insights into actionable foresight for a wide range of industries including health care, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer packaged goods. Contact us for more information.

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